IN THE CLAIMS

1.   (currently amended) A program distribution system comprising:

a receiver; and

a transmitter <u>including a distribution controller</u>;

said receiver being operable to accept a user request for a desired program, the user request being in a free style text format, to convert the user request into a distribution request e-mail message that includes the user request <u>and that is addressed to said distribution controller of said transmitter</u>, and to send the distribution request e-mail message to said transmitter;

said transmitter including:

a distributable program storing unit operable to store a plurality of distributable programs,

~~a~~ <u>said</u> distribution controller <u>being</u> operable to receive the distribution request e-mail message, to determine whether the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs, and to read out the requested program from said distributable program storing unit when the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs, and

a distributor operable to distribute the requested program to said receiver.

2.   (previously presented) The program distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said distributable program storing unit is further operable to store an associated title for each of the plurality of distributable programs, and

said distribution controller is further operable to compare each word of the user request with each of the stored titles and to read out the requested program from said distributable program storing unit when the user request

includes a title associated with one of the stored plurality of distributable programs.

3.   (currently amended) The program distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said receiver is further operable to include a predetermined subject field ~~expression~~ in the distribution request e-mail message ~~to~~ which indicates that the distribution request e-mail message includes the user request ~~is being transmitted~~.

4.   (cancelled).

5.   (previously presented) The program distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said distribution controller is further operable to transmit an answer e-mail message to said receiver in response to the distribution request e-mail message, the answer e-mail message including a notice of correspondence when the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs.

6.   (previously presented) The program distribution system according to claim 2, wherein said distribution controller is further operable to transmit an answer e-mail message to said receiver in response to the distribution request e-mail message, the answer e-mail message including a notice of correspondence when the user request includes a title associated with one of the stored plurality of distributable programs.

7.   (previously presented) The program distribution system according to claim 5, wherein said receiver is further operable to transmit a confirmation e-mail message to said distribution controller in response to the answer e-mail message when the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence, the confirmation e-mail message indicating that the user of said receiver has agreed to purchase the requested program, said distribution controller reading out the requested program from said distributable program storing unit when said

distribution controller receives the confirmation e-mail message.

8.   (previously presented) The program distribution system according to claim 6, wherein said receiver is further operable to transmit a confirmation e-mail message to said distribution controller in response to the answer e-mail message when the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence, the confirmation e-mail message indicating that the user of said receiver has agreed to purchase the requested program, said distribution controller reading out the requested program from said distributable program storing unit when said distribution controller receives the confirmation e-mail message.

9.   (previously presented) The program distribution system according to claim 5, further comprising a recorder connected to said receiver, and wherein said distribution controller is further operable to include supplemental information in the answer e-mail message, the supplemental information including a control command for causing said recorder to record the requested program.

10.   (previously presented) The program distribution system according to claim 6, further comprising a recorder connected to said receiver, and wherein said distribution controller is further operable to include supplemental information in the answer e-mail message, the supplemental information including a control command for causing said recorder to record the requested program.

11.   (currently amended) A method of distributing programs, said method comprising:

receiving, at a transmitter, a distribution request e-mail message from a receiver, the distribution request e-mail message being addressed to a distribution controller of the

<u>transmitter and</u> including a user request for a desired program, the user request being in a free style text format;

determining whether the requested program is one of a stored plurality of distributable programs;

reading out the requested program when the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs; and

distributing the requested program to the receiver.

12. (previously presented) The method according to claim 11, wherein an associated title is stored for each of the plurality of distributable programs, and said determining step includes comparing each word of the user request with each of the stored titles, and said reading out step reads out the requested program when the user request includes a title associated with one of the stored plurality of distributable programs.

13. (currently amended) The method according to claim 11, wherein the distribution request e-mail message includes a predetermined <u>subject field</u> which ~~expression to~~ indicate<u>s</u> that <u>the distribution request e-mail message includes</u> the user request ~~is being transmitted~~.

14. (cancelled).

15. (previously presented) The method according to claim 11, further comprising transmitting an answer e-mail message to the receiver in response to the distribution request e-mail message, the answer e-mail message including a notice of correspondence when the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs.

16. (previously presented) The method according to claim 12, further comprising transmitting an answer e-mail message to the receiver in response to the distribution request e-mail message, the answer e-mail message including a notice of

correspondence when the user request includes a title associated with one of the stored plurality of distributable programs.

17. (previously presented) The method according to claim 15, further comprising receiving a confirmation e-mail message from the receiver in response to the answer e-mail message when the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence, the confirmation e-mail message indicating that the user of the receiver has agreed to purchase the requested program, and wherein said reading step and said distributing step are carried out only when the confirmation e-mail message is received.

18. (previously presented) The method according to claim 16, further comprising receiving a confirmation e-mail message from the receiver in response to the answer e-mail message when the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence, the confirmation e-mail message indicating that the user of the receiver has agreed to purchase the requested program, and wherein said reading and said distributing step are carried out only when the confirmation e-mail message is received.

19. (previously presented) The method according to claim 15, wherein said transmitting step includes transmitting supplemental information in the answer e-mail message, the supplemental information including a control command for causing a recorder connected to the receiver to record the requested program.

20. (previously presented) The method according to claim 16, wherein said transmitting step includes transmitting supplemental information in the answer e-mail message, the supplemental information including a control command to cause a recorder connected to the receiver to record the requested program.

21. (currently amended) A transmitter, comprising:

a distributable program storing unit operable to store a plurality of distributable programs;

a distribution controller operable to receive ~~the~~ a distribution request e-mail message <u>addressed to said distribution controller</u> from a receiver, the distribution request e-mail message including a user request for a desired program, the user request being in a free style text format, to determine whether the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs, and to read out the requested program from said distributable program storing unit when the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs; and

a distributor operable to distribute the requested program to the receiver.

22.   (previously presented) The transmitter according to claim 21, wherein said distributable program storing unit is further operable to store an associated title for each of the plurality of distributable programs, and said distribution controller is further operable to compare each word of the user request with each of the stored titles and to read out the requested program from said distributable program storing unit when the user request includes a title associated with one of the stored plurality of distributable programs.

23.   (currently amended) The transmitter according to claim 21, wherein the distribution request e-mail message includes a predetermined <u>subject field which</u> ~~expression that~~ indicates that <u>the distribution request e-mail message includes</u> the user request ~~is being transmitted~~.

24.   (cancelled).

25.   (previously presented) The transmitter according to claim 21, wherein said distribution controller is further operable to transmit an answer e-mail message to the receiver in response to the distribution request e-mail message, the answer

e-mail message including a notice of correspondence when the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs.

26. (previously presented) The transmitter according to claim 22, wherein said distribution controller is further operable to transmit an answer e-mail message to the receiver in response to the distribution request e-mail message, the answer e-mail message including a notice of correspondence when the user request includes a title associated with one of the stored plurality of distributable programs.

27. (previously presented) The transmitter according to claim 25, wherein said distribution controller reads out the requested program from said distributable program storing unit when said distribution controller receives a confirmation e-mail message that is sent by the receiver in response to the answer e-mail message when the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence, the confirmation e-mail message indicating that the user of the receiver has agreed to purchase the selected program.

28. (previously presented) The transmitter according to claim 26, wherein said distribution controller reads out the requested program from said distributable program storing unit when said distributable controller receives a confirmation e-mail message that is sent by the receiver in response to the answer e-mail message when the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence, the confirmation e-mail message indicating that the user of the receiver has agreed to purchase the requested program.

29. (previously presented) The transmitter according to claim 25, wherein said distribution controller is further operable to include supplemental information in the answer e-mail message, the supplemental information including a control

command for causing a recorder connected to the receiver to record the requested program.

30. (previously presented) The transmitter according to claim 26, wherein said distribution controller is further operable to include supplemental information in the answer e-mail message, the supplemental information including a control command for causing a recorder connected to the receiver to record the requested program.

31. (currently amended) A receiver, comprising:

a controller operable to accept a user request for a desired program, the user request being in a free style text format, to convert the user request into a distribution request e-mail message that includes the user request and that is addressed to a distribution controller of a predetermined distribution unit, and to send the distribution request e-mail message to a the predetermined distribution unit; and

a front end operable to receive the requested program from the predetermined distribution unit when the requested program is available from the predetermined distribution unit.

32. (currently amended) The receiver according to claim 31, wherein said controller is further operable to include a predetermined subject field expression in the distribution request e-mail message to which indicates that the distribution request e-mail message includes the user request is being transmitted.

33. (cancelled).

34. (previously presented) The receiver according to claim 31, wherein said controller is further operable to receive an answer e-mail message sent by the predetermined distribution unit in response to the distribution request e-mail message, the answer e-mail message including a notice of correspondence when the requested program is available from the predetermined distribution unit.

35. (previously presented) The receiver according to claim 34, wherein said controller is further operable to transmit a confirmation e-mail message to the predetermined distribution unit when the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence, the confirmation e-mail message indicating that the user of said receiver has agreed to purchase the requested program.

36. (currently amended) The receiver according to claim ~~31~~34, wherein the answer e-mail message received by said controller includes supplemental information, the supplemental information including a control command for causing a recorder connected to said receiver to record the requested program.

37. (currently amended) A method of receiving programs, said method comprising:

accepting a user request for a desired program, the user request being in a free style text format;

converting the user request into a distribution request e-mail message that includes the user request <u>and that is addressed to a distribution controller of a predefined distribution unit</u>;

sending the distribution request e-mail message to ~~a~~ <u>the</u> predetermined distribution unit; and

receiving the requested program from the predetermined distribution unit when the requested program is available from the predetermined distribution unit.

38. (currently amended) The method according to claim 37, wherein the distribution request e-mail message includes a predetermined <u>subject field which</u> ~~expression to~~ indicate<u>s</u> that <u>the distribution request e-mail message includes the user request</u> ~~is being sent~~.

39. (previously presented) The method according to claim 37, further comprising receiving an answer e-mail message sent by the predetermined distribution unit in response to the

distribution request e-mail message, the answer e-mail message including a notice of correspondence when the requested program is available from the predetermined distribution unit.

40. (previously presented) The method according to claim 39, further comprising transmitting a confirmation e-mail message to the predetermined distribution unit when the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence, the confirmation e-mail message indicating that the user has agreed to purchase the requested program.

41. (previously presented) The method according to claim 37, wherein the answer e-mail message includes supplemental information, the supplemental information including a control command for causing a recorder record the received program.

42. (currently amended) The program distribution system according to claim 9, wherein the supplemental information includes information selected from the group consisting of ~~the time of the program, the price of the program,~~ cryptanalytic information for decrypting the program, and accounting information for the program.

43. (currently amended) The program distribution system according to claim 10, wherein the supplemental information includes information selected from the group consisting of ~~the time of the program, the price of the program,~~ cryptanalytic information for decrypting the program, and accounting information for the program.

44. (currently amended) The method according to claim 19, wherein the supplemental information includes information selected from the group consisting of ~~the time of the program, the price of the program,~~ cryptanalytic information for decrypting the program, and accounting information for the program.

45. (currently amended) The method according to claim 20, wherein the supplemental information includes information selected from the group consisting of ~~the time of the program, the price of the program,~~ cryptanalytic information for decrypting the program, and accounting information for the program.

46. (currently amended) The transmitter according to claim 29, wherein the supplemental information includes information selected from the group consisting of ~~the time of the program, the price of the program,~~ cryptanalytic information for decrypting the program, and accounting information for the program.

47. (currently amended) The transmitter according to claim 30, wherein the supplemental information includes information selected from the group consisting of ~~the time of the program, the price of the program,~~ cryptanalytic information for decrypting the program, and accounting information for the program.

48. (currently amended) The receiver according to claim 36, wherein the supplemental information includes information selected from the group consisting of ~~the time of the program, the price of the program,~~ cryptanalytic information for decrypting the program, and accounting information for the program.

49. (currently amended) The method according to claim 41, wherein the supplemental information includes information selected from the group consisting of ~~the time of the program, the price of the program,~~ cryptanalytic information for decrypting the program, and accounting information for the program.